

VZCZCXYZ0013
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBH #0110/01 0332153
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 022152Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0272
INFO RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU

UNCLAS NASSAU 000110

SIPDIS
STATE FOR CA/FPP

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [BF](#)
SUBJECT: Validation Study: Bahamian F1 visa holders

¶1. SUMMARY: Due to limited choices in post-secondary educational institutions in the Bahamas, each year many Bahamians choose to study in the United States. In November and December, 2009, Post completed a validation study examining overstay rates for Bahamian nationals studying on F-1 visas. The sample of 680 students was pulled from applicants between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2003. The results indicate that while more than 90% of visa holders from the survey were found to be in legal status, many adjusted to a status other than student after arriving in the United States.

¶2. METHODOLOGY: Post conducted a study of 680 F-1 Bahamian visa recipients. Due to the duration of F-1 visas, the sample had to be pulled from April 1, 2002-March 31, 2003. Because the applications available were at least six years old, many phone numbers were either not available or inaccurate. The majority of the data collection was conducted through ADIS and SEVIS queries with phone calls playing a minor roll. The validation study covered a 365-day period from April 1, 2002 until March 31, 2003. This data range was chosen to allow for students to complete college with any addition OPT/internships that may follow. Using CA/FPP guideline, a random sample was used to select 680 F-1 visa holders.

¶3. DATA COLLECTION: Due to the unreliability of phone numbers, Post found that it was impossible in most cases to contact visa holders by phone. The initial data collection was done with a batch ADIS and SEVIS search performed by FPP. The results of this search were integrated into the main spreadsheet and were cross checked by doing individual ADIS searches. Applicants were then placed into the categories listed below.

¶4. THE FOUR STATUS CATEGORIES:

- a. Confirmed Return: Of the 680 issuances, 450 are confirmed returns.
- b. In Legal Status other than F1: Of the 680 issuances, 97 were found to be in legal status in the United States, most commonly as LPRs or with H1Bs.
- c. Active Student: Of the 680 issuances, 42 are still actively students per SEVIS.
- d. Inconclusive/Possible overstay: Of the 680 issuances, 73 are inconclusive as to their current status. Because phone numbers were not available, Post was unable to confirm that these 73 issuants were overstays although it is likely many of them are.

¶5. RESULTS: Although Post was unable to confirm any overstays, 10.7% of F-1 holders are inconclusive/possible overstays.

Category

Total Number

Percentage

Confirmed Return

466

68.50%

In Legal Status

98

14.40%

Active SEVIS Status

43

6.30%

Inconclusive/Possible overstay

73

10.70%

16. Post further analyzed the results based on gender. The following tables show a break-down of each of the categories based on gender. It can be noted that there isn't a significant difference between men and women.

Women

Category

Total Number

Percentage

Confirmed Return

269

69.10%

In Legal Status

56

14.40%

Active SEVIS Status

27

6.90%

Inconclusive/Possible overstay

37

9.50%

Men

Category

Total Number

Percentage

Confirmed Return

197

67.70%

In Legal Status

42

14.40%

Active SEVIS Status

16

5.50%

Inconclusive/Possible overstay

36

12.40%

17. Although 93% of F-1 issuants are between the ages of 20 and 39, there are issuants from 14 to 59 years old. The following tables show a more in-depth look at the trends based on age. A few trends can be noted: older students are more likely to finish their studies and return home, the 30-39 year age group had the highest rate of adjusting status after finishing schooling, and the 20-29 year age group has the longest duration of status.

Age

Confirmed Return

In Legal Status

Active SEVIS

Inconclusive/Possible overstay

0-19

50%

0%

0%

50%

20-29

69.80%

10.70%

7.90%

11.60%

30-39

64.40%

24.90%

3.40%

7.30%

40-49

72.70%

12.10%

3.00%

12.10%

50-59

75.00%

8.30%

0.00%

16.70%

18. Of the 98 in a current legal status other than their original F1 status, about two-thirds of these were in an immigrant status with the remaining one-third in a non-immigrant status, primarily on H1B work visas. Comparing the date the original F1 visa was printed to the final completion or termination date of their SEVIS status, it appears that most changed their status only after four to five years in the U.S. This lengthy period of active SEVIS status indicates that while many F1 visa holders did change to another status, it does not appear that was the primary, immediate purpose for traveling to the U.S.

19. CONCLUSIONS: Nearly 90% of F1 visa holders were found to be a current legal status with the remaining 10% being inconclusive due to old telephone information. Although it seems more than 90% of F1 issuances are in a legal status, a significant percentage adjusted to another upon arriving in the United States, often through work or family relationships. While it is understandable that applicants' lives will change over lengthy educational careers, particularly for those in the 20-39 age range, adjudicating officers should continue to assess the intent of student visa applicants in order to minimize potential fraud.
AVANT